



Paul Richard LePage
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
BUREAU OF PARKS & LANDS
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0022

Walter Whitcomb
COMMISSIONER

Date: December 23, 2014

To: Aroostook Hills Region Plan Advisory Committee Members
From: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,
Bureau of Parks and Lands
Re: Five-Year Review of the Aroostook Hills Region Management Plan

Enclosed for your review is the first Five-Year Review of the 2009 Aroostook Hills Region Management Plan covering the period from 2009 through 2014.

The plan guides the management activities of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands on public lands at Scopan (formerly Squapan); Scraggly Lake; and 11 small lots in the Towns of Hammond and Sheridan, in Moro, Nashville, and Oxbow Plantations, and in Townships T9 R5, T12 R8, and T13 R5. While the plan was adopted for a 15-year period, the Bureau is required to report to the Advisory Committee at five-year intervals on accomplishments and changing conditions that may warrant amendments to the plan. (The plan can be viewed at http://www.maine.gov/dacf/aroostook_hills.)

The enclosed Five-Year Review, prepared in a table format:

- lists plan recommendations (left column) and actions taken (right column) to implement each recommendation; and
- identifies from the Bureau's perspective any new issues or circumstances that were not addressed in the plan that may warrant Committee discussion or action (at end of table).

The Bureau asks the Aroostook Hills Region Plan Advisory Committee members to review the enclosed material and identify any new issues or circumstances they feel warrant Committee input or action.

For the Aroostook Hills Region Plan, the Bureau has identified one new circumstance that requires the Committee's attention before further action is taken, and the Bureau seeks Committee input through member responses to this memo.

Potential Maple Sugaring Operation on a Portion of Scopan Mountain

The Bureau is considering permitting a maple sugaring operation on approximately 300 acres of sugar maple-dominated stands on Scopan Mountain. The 300 acres would be within the 1,784 acres on Scopan Ridge assigned a Wildlife dominant resource allocation, which was applied as a temporary allocation pending review of the area as a potential ecological reserve. For this to be allowed, the potential ecological reserve area (see page 60 of the Plan) would need to be reduced. No commercial timber harvesting would occur in the leased area. The Bureau believes that this change can be implemented while maintaining the late successional

character of the area defined for a maple syrup lease and so would be compatible with an adjacent reserve area.

The proposed lease is in response to conditions not addressed in the original plan. A 2011 report to the Maine legislature highlighted the potential for expansion of the maple sugar industry in the state and in Aroostook County specifically, and encouraged state agencies to support and promote the industry. In addition, a new business established in the area has interest in a lease. Providing an opportunity for a maple sugaring operation on up to 300 acres of the Unit would have economic benefits to the local community and the Bureau, which would collect a per tap lease fee.

Do Advisory Committee members support the Bureau issuing a permit for a maple sugaring operation on approximately 300 acres of Scapan Ridge, with an amendment to the management plan that would remove the designated lease area from the Wildlife allocation and potential ecological reserve area, while maintaining the late successional character of the stand?

If any of the Advisory Committee members identifies new issues or circumstances that, in their opinion, may require an amendment to the plan, or that should be discussed with the Committee prior to the Bureau taking action without amending the plan, then the Bureau will seek Committee comment on those issues through correspondence or a meeting.

Depending on Committee input on the above issue and any issues identified by the committee, a decision will be made to formally amend the plan or to take action without amending the plan. If a decision is made to formally amend the plan, the Bureau will hold a public meeting to gather public input on the proposed amendment(s), document public comments and Bureau responses, and adopt the plan amendment. If a decision is made to take action without amending the plan, the Bureau will document the Committee discussion and the specific actions that can be taken without a plan amendment.

We look forward to receiving your response to the Five-Year Review and any additional new issues or circumstances that may warrant Committee input or action. Please direct your comments or questions **by January 9, 2015** to Jim Vogel via email (Jim.Vogel@maine.gov) or post (Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands, #22 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0022).